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Draft report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its eighth session

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Peacebuilding Commission was requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly for an annual debate and review. The report will also be submitted to the Council, pursuant to its resolution 1646 (2005), for an annual debate. The report covers the eighth session of the Commission, held from 1 January to 31 December 2014.

2. On 29 October 2010, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted resolutions 65/7 and 1947 (2010) respectively, through which the two organs, inter alia, requested the Commission to reflect, in its annual reports, the progress made in taking forward the relevant recommendations contained in the 2010 report of the co-facilitators on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (A/64/868-S/2010/393, annex). Beginning with the report on its sixth session, the implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2010 review has been mainstreamed into the reporting on the Commission's policy and country-specific activities. The structure of the two previous reports reflected this development in content and in format, placing added emphasis on performance of the main functions in the specific country settings, the role of the membership, the links with parent organs and the themes which the Commission explored.

3. As mandated by the General Assembly and the Security Council in their identical resolutions of 29 October 2010, 65/7 and 1947 (2010), both organs will launch a further comprehensive review of the peacebuilding architecture in 2015. The present report will reflect the findings of the Commission's advance preparation for this review, which drew upon lessons learned from the implementation of recommendations from the 2010 review. The findings further reflect the ambitions and expectations of Member States emanating from the 2015 review.

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4. In the report on its seventh session, the Commission decided to convene an annual session to commemorate "Peacebuilding Day"[1] and to enable closer interaction and engagement among the relevant stakeholders in New York and from the capitals of Member States on key challenges to international peacebuilding. The present report provides an overview of the outcome of and the envisaged follow-up to the first annual session, held on 23 June 2014.

II. Work of the Commission

5. Through its country-specific configurations and its broader policy advisory role, the Commission continued to carry out its core functions of advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention; resource mobilization and partnerships; and forging coherence. The Commission further strengthened linkages at the country level with the programmatic activity of the Peacebuilding Fund. New avenues included the convening of the annual session, which addressed international support and strategies to promote domestic resource mobilization in countries emerging from conflict.

A. Overview of issues from the 2014 agenda going forward

6. In pursuing its agenda going forward for 2014,[2] the Commission has identified three areas of focus, namely: (a) preparation for and convening of its first ever annual session; (b) advance preparation for the 2015 review; and (c) mainstreaming regional perspectives into the work of the Commission. In parallel, the Commission has advanced its country-specific engagement through a continued focus on its three core functions of advocacy and accompaniment, resource mobilization and forging coherence.

7. The tragic outbreak of Ebola in three countries on the agenda, namely, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, has forced the Commission to shift the focus of its engagement towards supporting efforts made by those countries and by the United Nations, the international community and other relevant actors to fight the disease. The Commission met regularly to focus international attention on the need to ensure that the outbreak does not create a long-term threat to the progress achieved in the three countries towards sustainable peace and inclusive development.

B. Advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention

8. Recognizing the high risk of relapse in situations where national institutions are weak or insufficiently developed, the Commission has sought to give particular emphasis in all of its deliberations to institution-building and social cohesion. As an intergovernmental body, the Commission is positioned to bring to bear the collective weight of its members to focus attention on outstanding challenges in a

[1] See declaration by the Commission on "Peacebuilding: the way towards sustainable peace and security" (PBC/6/OC/6, para. 14).

[2] As contained in the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its seventh session (A/68/729-S/2014/67), paras. 39 to 42.

country's process towards peace consolidation. This role is particularly important during the transition and drawdown of United Nations missions.

9. In Burundi, the Commission participated actively in the steering group, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, which oversaw the planning for the transfer of responsibilities from the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) to the Government of Burundi and the United Nations country team. Through its participation, the Commission sought to ensure that the drawdown of BNUB does not have a negative impact on the country's progress towards the achievement of sustainable peace and does not result in gaps in the international community's attention and commitment to peace consolidation in Burundi. The opportunities and concerns presented by this transition were conveyed by the Commission in briefings to the Security Council. As a result of lack of trust between the Government of Burundi and some political parties, as well as the rising number of security incidents involving youth associated with political parties, the Commission became a platform for members of the international community to express concerns over the risk of political polarization and politically motivated violence. At the same time, the Commission sought to sustain the attention of Security Council members on the unfolding dynamics in Burundi, working closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to provide the Council with regular updates, material and advice, in order to best manage the difficult period, which was characterized by mistrust and security incidents.

10. During the visit of the chair of the Burundi configuration to the country in late May, the Commission agreed with the Government to organize a round-table meeting with its main international partners in order to help reaffirm the mutual commitments agreed in the 2012 Geneva Partners Conference and better prepare for challenges following the drawdown of BNUB. Going forward, the Commission will draw upon the outcome of the round table, held on 11 and 12 December 2014 in Bujumbura, in order to focus its engagement with Burundi on the processes and measures that are critical for the successful and democratic conduct of elections in 2015, the continued reinforcement of social cohesion, and the acceleration of the Government's development agenda.

11. Following the withdrawal in March of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), the Commission advocated for the international community to remain committed to supporting the ongoing efforts of Sierra Leone to ensure sustainable peace. In the light of the spread of Ebola to Sierra Leone in May, the Commission was forced to recalibrate its engagement. Rather than scaling down its activities, in accordance with the Security Council's recommendation, the Commission has focused on the potential impact of the epidemic on institutional and political stability.

12. In Guinea, the Commission turned its focus during the reporting period to identifying opportunities to accompany and support the capacity of the new Parliament, as a critical component of the country's efforts to consolidate peace and democracy. A joint mission to Conakry, undertaken on behalf of the Commission by the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and two non-United Nations partners, the National Democratic Institute and the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa, sought to identify political and programmatic mechanisms for supporting the new Parliament. The

Minister for Human Rights and Civil Liberties of Guinea, who is also the political focal point of the country-specific configuration, travelled to New York in June to address the Commission as the keynote speaker at its annual session. He also addressed the country configuration at an informal meeting, at which he presented Guinea's priorities for peacebuilding and human rights and exchanged views with its members.

13. In Liberia, the Commission's performance of its advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention function was distinct from those in Burundi and Sierra Leone. Financial constraints and an insufficient national revenue base had continued to stall progress in the area of security sector reform and the rule of law. There was only limited progress towards the implementation of the Government of Liberia's Reconciliation road map. In this context, the Commission advocated for greater Government commitment to and ownership of justice and security reform, particularly in view of the planned drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). It also encouraged the Government to ensure greater involvement of civil society, including women's groups, in the national reconciliation process. Moreover, and in close partnership with the Government, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNMIL, the Commission promoted a continuous dialogue on gender issues. It has also promoted an increased allocation for gender issues from the Peacebuilding Fund. As a result, Liberia is one of the countries where the allocation of the Fund for gender-related issues is higher than the target of 15 per cent set by the Secretary-General in his report on women's participation in peacebuilding (A/65/354-S/2010/466, para. 36). Recognizing the severe resource constraints facing the Government of Liberia and the centrality of natural resources for state finances, the Commission sought greater international support for the management of both natural resources and land disputes. The focus on those issues was prioritized, as they were seen as key sources of conflict in the country in the past. The Commission has repeatedly reiterated to relevant stakeholders the importance of managing natural resources and land issues in a way that would benefit all citizens. At the request of the Government and the Commission, a study was conducted by UNDP, the World Bank, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Liberia and the Liberian Land Commission on citizens' engagement in natural resources management, with support from the Peacebuilding Support Office. This is an area where the partnership among the Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the World Bank promises to help generate new strategies and international support, which will be particularly important following the country's recovery from the Ebola outbreak and in advance of the drawdown of UNMIL.

14. In Guinea-Bissau, the Commission focused its attention on supporting the efforts of the United Nations, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to create a supportive political environment for the conduct of presidential and legislative elections in April and May. In this respect, the Commission issued two press statements, on 14 and 19 May, respectively, welcoming the peaceful conduct of the two rounds of elections, which marked the end of the transition period that followed the unconstitutional change of Government in 2012. In addition to visits undertaken by the Chair in January and October, the Commission offered a platform for the Special Representative, the transitional government and key regional and international actors to exchange views and information on the progress of the electoral preparations. The subsequent installation of a democratically elected

government has paved the way for the restoration of constitutional order, the resumption of international recognition and the re-engagement of development partners. The Commission is expected to accompany the national government's medium- to long-term plan to develop a national peacebuilding strategy and a framework of mutual commitments with its regional and international partners.

15. The tragic recurrence of conflict in the Central African Republic has created challenges in the country that are significantly different from those that were prevailing when the country was placed on the Commission's agenda. A special political mission was replaced by a multidimensional peacekeeping mission, with a corresponding increase in the presence of international actors on the ground. The Commission sought to sustain attention on the unfolding situation in the country among a diverse group of Member States by convening a series of discussions with religious leaders, experts on the region and representatives of civil society organizations. It also offered an informal platform for the exchange of information and updates by the United Nations lead departments, the World Bank, regional countries and key development partners. Following an appeal to the Commission by the President of the Transitional Government of the Central African Republic during a visit by the configuration chair in February, the Peacebuilding Fund and the World Bank joined efforts to pay the salaries of civil servants from May through August, which contributed to the re-establishment of core public services in the country. At the same time, the continuing security, fiscal and institutional challenges faced by the transitional authorities posed new challenges to the ability of the Commission to accompany the transition process in the country. The ceasefire agreement signed in Brazzaville on 23 July 2014, however, should lead to agreement on a political framework for which the Commission can catalyse the support of the United Nations, and regional and international actors.

C. Resource mobilization and partnerships

16. The Commission has continued to approach its resource mobilization function in the broader context of its role in advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention. The Commission has observed that in many cases, progress in the peaceful management of political competition, as well as in the effectiveness of and transparency in financial management, encourages greater donor engagement and commitment. At the same time, the Commission has increased its attention to areas of State and intergovernmental policy, including domestic revenue generation and the curbing of illicit financial flows, that could provide complementary avenues for resource mobilization. The Commission believes that this approach would reinforce its commitment to the promotion of national ownership by placing greater emphasis on the country's capacity to generate and utilize domestic resources.

17. In Burundi, for example, the Commission has continued to draw upon the outcome of the 2012 Geneva Partners Conference and its partnership with the World Bank in order to sustain the mutual commitment of the Government and its development partners to initiate a dialogue on broader political and economic reforms and economic development needs. In order to reinvigorate earlier commitments and rebuild trust between the country and its partners, plans for a round table in Bujumbura were initiated in May during visits to Burundi and to the World Bank by the chair of the Burundi configuration.

18. In Guinea-Bissau, the Commission provided a forum for the new Government to present its plans and priorities, which will be taken forward to a donor conference that is planned for February 2015. The Commission has supported the plans put forward by the newly elected Government to clarify existing commitments for the exploitation of mineral resources, ensuring that resources are used to maximize public utility. This review should enable the country to improve its capacity to generate domestic resources. A national strategic plan, aimed at developing a vision of comprehensive State-building, is being developed by the new Government and will be presented at the donor conference. The conference will provide an opportunity for the Government to engage its partners in support of its medium- to long-term peace consolidation and development strategy. In response to those dynamic and nationally led planning processes and the Government's strong commitment to enact reforms, the Commission is expected to support the donor conference, including through advocacy with international partners.

19. The Ebola crisis has limited the performance of the Commission of this function in the three most affected countries on its agenda. The urgency and predominance of the emergency medical and public health response fell outside the Commission's purview and competence. The Commission has sought to strengthen its cooperation with the World Bank and other operational actors around the response to the Ebola crisis in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone focusing on the consequences of the crisis on State fragility, social cohesion and political institutions. The Commission invited the World Bank and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in November to provide a brief on the economic, social and political impact of the crisis. The briefing was an opportunity to highlight the need for the scaling-up of international efforts to mitigate the deterioration in economic growth, State finances and core State functioning in the three countries.

20. The Commission will continue to fulfil its resource mobilization functions through a combination of advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention in a broad range of issues. This approach recognizes the deep interdependence among governance, inclusive politics and resource mobilization. It also builds on the Commission's utility as a diplomatic platform, as opposed to a venue for fundraising. The Commission's work on advocacy and sustaining attention, on resource mobilization, and on forging coherence will increasingly become mutually reinforcing and will be pursued strategically to help place the needs and priorities of the countries concerned at the centre of the international community's attention. To this end, and as demonstrated by the discussion that took place at the annual session, there is a need to build more extensive country-specific and thematic partnerships with United Nations and non-United Nations partners, in particular with the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

D. Forging coherence

21. In the report on its previous session, the Commission noted that it could strengthen the coherence of peacebuilding-related engagements in countries on its agenda by highlighting key gaps in international support for countries emerging from conflict and by drawing attention to bottlenecks in their political, institutional and economic development. It also pointed to the need for greater consistency and coherence of decisions made by its Member States on the peacebuilding-related

areas of bilateral assistance, and for more consistent follow-up of commitments made in relevant multilateral forums.

22. In Burundi, the Commission intensified its efforts to engage key regional partners, in particular during the brief period of political tensions that occurred during the reporting period. The visit undertaken in May by the chair of the Burundi configuration to Rwanda and to the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa, along with frequent meetings of the Commission with Burundi's neighbours, regional States and key international partners, has contributed to greater coherence of support at a time of heightened tensions. In addition, the Commission supported the coherence of peacebuilding-related initiatives in Burundi at the country level. The Commission has worked in close partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office in order to enhance international support and build consensus around the programmatic activities in the country backed by the Peacebuilding Fund. This synergy will be particularly crucial in addressing the remaining critical peacebuilding issues, especially in relation to the conduct and acceptance of the upcoming elections and following the drawdown of BNUB.

23. In Guinea-Bissau, regional support and international commitment to a successful transition was evident throughout the preparation for the presidential and legislative elections, which were held in April and May. The Commission contributed to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to ensure that neighbouring countries and other regional and subregional actors were kept informed and were invested in support of the transition process and the timely conduct of the elections. The Commission has continued to promote the coordination and alignment of support for the post-election priorities of Guinea-Bissau among States in the region, key subregional and international organizations, and development partners.

24. With regard to the Central African Republic, the region will continue to play a supportive role in developing and encouraging a political solution to the crisis. The Commission can complement the efforts of the United Nations leadership in the field to ensure that the region and neighbouring States are working in close coordination in support of security and stability in the country. This approach would take into consideration the specific regional dynamics and the need to ensure that the security and political concerns and the interests of relevant regional actors are adequately addressed.

25. In Liberia, the Commission supported efforts by the Government, United Nations actors and bilateral partners to strengthen a coordinated approach to building capacity in the areas of justice and security, including the entire rule of law chain.

Coherence and the regional aspects of peacebuilding

26. During the reporting period, the Commission placed added emphasis on the importance of forging greater regional coherence as a key factor in helping countries to sustain peace and avoid relapse into conflict. Recent developments in countries on the Commission's agenda have highlighted the crucial role that neighbouring countries, the African Union and African subregional organizations can and should play as primary partners in sustaining political processes and in addressing sources of instability. The Commission, therefore, has placed greater emphasis during the reporting period on actively engaging its African members, in

particular those in the immediate neighbourhood of the countries on the agenda. The Commission has also placed emphasis on sharpening the institutional linkages and collaboration with the African Union and relevant subregional organizations with a view to more effectively addressing country-specific challenges and opportunities.

27. At the same time, the African members on the Commission have established a political caucus aimed at articulating a regional perspective on peacebuilding. The caucus could play a crucial role in catalysing a more proactive engagement of the African members and of the countries on the agenda in shaping and orienting the Commission's advice to the Security Council and in bringing greater alignment of regional and Member States' policies when addressing the needs and concerns of the countries on the agenda.

28. In its annual session on 23 June and at other meetings, the Commission noted the efforts of the African Union, with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, to address the challenges posed by illicit financial flows from Africa. A regional approach to address this challenge would be required, including through technical assistance and experience-sharing among African countries. This is an area where the Commission's partnership with the African Union could contribute to gradual policy development at the global level through relevant intergovernmental forums.

29. In order to further advance the Commission's engagement and coordination with the African Union and African subregional organizations, the Chair led a delegation comprising the chairs of the Burundi and the Central African Republic configurations to Cairo and Addis Ababa from 24 to 26 November. In Cairo, the delegation participated in a workshop on the theme "Regional aspects of peacebuilding", hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa with the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office. In Addis Ababa, the delegation held a policy dialogue with the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa.

30. The workshop in Cairo represented an opportunity for the Commission's delegation to engage in a dialogue with representatives of African Governments, including countries on the Commission's agenda and representatives of the African Union, the regional economic commissions and research institutes, as well as of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and of key partner countries. The workshop was convened with a view to generating preliminary inputs to the 2015 review on the theme of regional aspects of peacebuilding. In this regard, the workshop focused on the role of regional actors in support of credible political processes and in support of building viable national institutions in the African countries emerging from conflict. The discussions confirmed that the Commission should further enhance its engagement with and support for regional initiatives aimed at encouraging inclusive and sustained political dialogue in those countries. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for the Commission to play a greater role in forging coherence among the bilateral engagements that are led by African institutions, by the United Nations, by the international financial institutions, and the African Development Bank, thus reinforcing the linkages between security and development approaches to building and sustaining peace. To this end, participants noted the opportunity offered by the 2015 review to explore and recommend

practical adjustments that would strengthen the contribution of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to regional peace and development objectives.

31. The interaction with the African Union Peace and Security Council during the visit of the group of chairs to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa sought to lay the foundation for a more systematic exchange of views and greater complementarity of efforts in support of peace consolidation between the Commission and the African Union Peace and Security Council, with specific focus on Burundi, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. It was noted that there is a need to develop common and shared understanding among the Commission, the African Union country liaison offices and the United Nations presence in the three countries of the context-specific opportunities and challenges for peace consolidation. The dialogue also reflected a convergence of views on the need for factoring the regional dimension throughout the continuum of post-conflict engagement. In this regard, the dialogue underscored the complementarity between the roles and functions of the United Nations and those of regional actors in accompanying sustainable political and socioeconomic recovery processes in the African countries emerging from conflict. Members of the African Union Peace and Security Council highlighted the need for greater focus on joint collaboration in preventative actions and on long-term institution-building. In this context, members of the Council underscored the need for developing a common African Union position vis-à-vis the areas that will be addressed during the 2015 review.

32. The exchange between the Economic Commission for Africa and the representatives of the African Development Bank focused on ways to strengthen communication and deepen collaboration in support of policy development that would help place greater programmatic emphasis on addressing areas of fragility and the risks of relapse. In this regard, the African Development Bank noted that there is increasing focus on institution-building and sustainability in the design of the Bank's engagement in post-conflict situations. The Commission noted the need for programmes that would support the capacity of Governments to generate domestic revenues and effectively negotiate contracts that would help maximize the benefit from the exploitation of natural resources. The Bank referred to the newly established African Natural Resources Centre, which is dedicated to providing country-specific support in close coordination with the African Union.

E. Policy development

33. The diverse and varied experience of the United Nations and the international community provides an opportunity for the Commission to explore means for further policy development, which would ensure timely and sustained support during the critical phases of a country's post-conflict development. The Commission's first annual session, the work of the organizational committee in preparation for the 2015 review and the review of the transition of United Nations missions led by the Commission's Working Group on Lessons Learned have highlighted the potential of the Commission in this area.

The first annual session (23 June) on the theme "Sustainable support for peacebuilding: the domestic and international aspects"

34. On 23 June, the Peacebuilding Commission convened its first annual session, which represented a critical step in the continuing evolution of the work of the Commission and its orientation. In addition to its country-specific engagement, the unique and broad-based membership structure was considered an asset through which the Commission should be able to advance global policy relevant to countries emerging from conflict. Through successive annual sessions, the Commission hopes to offer a standing platform for reflection on the role of international frameworks and policies, and the commitment of Member States to help countries avoid relapse into conflict.

35. The first annual session was convened on the theme "Sustainable support for peacebuilding: domestic and international aspects". Through the use of a thematic focus on domestic revenue generation and the fight against illicit financial flows from countries emerging from conflict, the session explored effective and sustainable systems for resource mobilization as critical elements for peace consolidation. The selection of the theme marked the Commission's shift towards more practical means of performing its core function of resource mobilization beyond traditional fundraising. Two interactive substantive working sessions addressed: (a) the mobilization of international and domestic resources and revenue generation; and (b) lessons learned on the development of national capacities and sustainability of resources in the context of transitions of United Nations missions. The working sessions brought together Member States, many of whom were represented by officials based in capital, United Nations entities, international financial institutions, the African Development Bank and representatives of specialized civil society organizations.

36. The discussion sought to draw the attention of key actors to gaps in intergovernmental mechanisms to ensure timely, targeted and sustained support for countries emerging from conflict in the area of mobilization of domestic resources. At the same time, several participants noted the need for effective global policy frameworks to help curb and mitigate the impact of illicit financial flows out of those countries and to support capacity-building in the areas of taxation and domestic revenue generation. Sustained commitment in this area would enhance the ability of post-conflict countries to domestically generate a greater part of the financial resources needed to rebuild their economic infrastructure and deliver essential services, thereby strengthening the social contract between the State and its citizens.

37. The interactive discussion in the first working session enabled the Commission to identify four areas for further policy development in support of post-conflict countries: (a) capacity development to generate domestic revenues, including the capacity to negotiate natural resource contracts; (b) transparency and accountability of extractive industries and applicable tax regimes; (c) fight against illicit financial flows by developing international frameworks that would help increase mutual accountability and international cooperation on tax regimes, and address tax avoidance and trade mispricing; and (d) address inappropriate banking privacy laws, which are critical components of some illicit financial flows.

38. As a follow-up to the annual session, the Commission is planning to pursue the four identified policy areas and to explore practical ways to advocate on behalf of

post-conflict countries in deliberations taking place in relevant intergovernmental forums. Through its advocacy, the Commission will help identify the policies required to reinforce international and regional efforts to fight illicit financial flows. In this regard and during the meetings held in November in Addis Ababa with the African Union, Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, the Commission explored ways to collaborate in support of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa.

Advance preparation for the 2015 review

39. Between May and October, the Organizational Committee embarked on advance preparation for the 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture. In their respective resolutions 65/7 and 1947 (2010), the General Assembly and the Security Council called for a comprehensive review to be conducted in 2015. The purpose of the advance preparation was to foster broader ownership of the review among key Member States through inclusive and extensive consultations on the objectives, scope, methodology and modalities for conducting the review. In parallel, the Secretary-General initiated a process, endorsed by his Policy Committee in February, to develop a collective contribution to the review from the United Nations system (see A/69/553-S/2014/763). This process has generated recommendations on the strategic orientation and utility of the Commission. Both preparatory processes were designed to address a key shortcoming of the 2010 review, namely, the lack of both ownership of its outcome and recommendations from both Member States and the United Nations system. A broad understanding on the ambitions of and the expectations from the review were further discussed in an informal retreat organized at the Ambassadorial level by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation with the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials. On 3 November, the Chair submitted the outcome of the Commission's advance preparation to the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council for consideration.

40. The advance preparation reflects a convergence among Member States that the 2015 review should place the challenges facing the countries emerging from conflict at the centre of the United Nations response in post-conflict situations. A commitment to help States avoid relapse into violent conflict was the motivation for the creation in 2005 of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund. Member States agreed that the review needed to take this original motivation as its point of departure. The Commission proposed that the review analyse the progress made since 2005 and the continuing gaps in the response of the international community and the United Nations to post-conflict challenges. To achieve this, it was agreed that the review should be broad in scope in order for it to generate recommendations that could help adapt the three entities to current realities and the changing approaches of the United Nations system and the needs of countries emerging from conflict.

41. Member States have further agreed that the analysis underpinning the review should, therefore, be anchored in country-specific case studies, from which broader lessons on progress and causes of relapse into conflict can be drawn. It was also agreed that the case studies should be combined with a broader policy and institutional review aimed at taking stock of the evolution in the responses of regional, and international institutions and the United Nations in post-conflict situations since 2005, the nature and impact of the contribution of the peacebuilding

architecture to those responses, where it was involved, and the implications for the advisory role of the Commission to its mandating bodies, the General Assembly and the Security Council, in support of broader peacebuilding objectives in the countries concerned. As a result, the Commission's preparatory process has produced suggested terms of reference for the review that would help guide the case studies and identify the specific structural and systemic gaps and shortcomings for which practical and actionable recommendations and adjustments were needed. The advance preparation also yielded an agreement on modalities for conducting the review. Those modalities would observe the intergovernmental character of the review, while ensuring that the process is informed by recommendations submitted through an advisory group of experts for consideration and final decision by the Assembly and the Council.

42. The advance preparations confirmed that Member States remain committed to ensuring that the outcome of the review will contribute to helping countries emerging from conflict to avoid relapse into conflict. Recent cases of relapse in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan highlight the continuing gaps in global, United Nations and regional support for peace consolidation. A key ambition for the 2015 review, therefore, would be to generate ideas that help strengthen the performance and impact of the Commission in order to realize its full potential and improve its work as a tool of strategic utility to operational actors in the field and its advisory role to the General Assembly and the Security Council. The review could highlight key gaps in current political, developmental and security support for countries emerging from conflict for the benefit of policymakers and operational actors. In going over current practice, the review could highlight the practical links and complementarity between the security, institutional and socioeconomic-related aspects of peace consolidation and broader political frameworks.

43. The support for a broad scope for the 2015 review points to the acknowledgement by Member States that the political and operational components of a broader United Nations and global peacebuilding architecture must work in synergy. The Commission agreed therefore, that the analysis underpinning the 2015 review should also be undertaken in conjunction and synergy with the upcoming review of peace operations by the Secretary-General.

Strengthening the advisory function to the Security Council

44. The Commission has continued to explore ways to strengthen the advisory function to and improve interaction with the Security Council. The Commission has pursued two tracks in its relations with the Security Council: (a) a thematic focus on the transitions of United Nations missions coordinated by the Working Group on Lessons Learned under the chairmanship of Japan; and (b) periodic stock-taking, at the expert level, coordinated by Rwanda. The stock-taking exercise has examined the scope of the Commission's advisory function to the Council and the modality of their interaction when countries are on the agenda of both organs. In addition, the third informal interactive dialogue among members of the Security Council and the Commission's group of chairs addressed "the recurring relapse into conflict" witnessed in recent years.

Thematic focus: "transition of United Nations missions"

45. The transition of United Nations missions represented a key area in which the Commission can make a valuable contribution as an advisory body to the Security Council.[3] During the reporting period, the Commission's advisory role in this area was carried out with a view to supporting the drawdown UNIPSIL, the initiation of the drawdown of BNUB, and the ongoing drawdown of UNMIL. Following initial discussions conducted by the Working Group on Lessons Learned in 2012, the Commission decided to focus "the transition of United Nations missions and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission"[4] in 2014.

46. The drawdown and withdrawal of missions mandated by the Security Council in post-conflict settings reflects a country's transformation from conflict to sustainable peace and development. While a decrease in attention from the Council could be seen as a sign of positive developments in a post-conflict country, the development of sustainable national capacities and resources is a long-term process that requires clear commitment from national stakeholders, strong national leadership and sustained support from the international community. Through interactive discussions in its annual session and a series of consultations under the auspices of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, the Commission has identified two critical challenges resulting from the transition processes of United Nations missions: (a) sustaining support for funding and technical capacity gaps; and (b) sustaining support for inclusive political processes. The Commission's experience in accompanying the process of the drawdown and withdrawal of UNIPSIL has confirmed the importance of providing sustained international attention and engagement with those countries in transition, in close collaboration with the United Nations and other relevant actors. It has also showed that the Commission could play a useful role in sensitizing and engaging key partners in New York on the challenges the transition has created for the Government, the society and the work of the United Nations.

47. Discussions at the annual session, as well as in the Working Group on Lessons Learned, pointed to insufficient funding in international financing in the immediate aftermath of conflict and the lower levels of funding following the drawdown of United Nations missions, despite the continuing need for investments in the building of critical State institutions. This "financial cliff" arising from the termination of activities by the mission and the departure of its personnel was identified as an additional drawback that the countries in transition needed to address. The Commission noted, therefore, that in order to create a conducive environment during and after the drawdown of mandated missions, there is a need for greater support for building critical State institutions. This will include support for the development of national capacity to generate domestic resources and to curb illicit financial flows and for the creation of a legal and economic infrastructure for private sector growth.

48. In parallel with the challenge of addressing funding and capacity gaps associated with the drawdown of United Nations missions, the Commission noted the need to address possible gaps in the scale and scope of support for dialogue around outstanding political issues. Critical processes, such as national reconciliation and transitional justice, require persistence and continuity. While the

[3] Paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 60/180 and 1645 (2005).

[4] See report of the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

measures are put in place to increase the political capacity of country teams through improved coordination between the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP, more efforts are needed in order to increase the scale and delivery of those measures and to ensure that they are focused more on national priorities.

49. The Commission discussed how, as part of its advisory role, it could play a more practical role in supporting a smoother and more seamless transition from a sizeable United Nations mission to a development-oriented presence of the United Nations. The Commission noted that its broad-based membership could help sustain political, financial and technical engagement from the international community, including regional actors and the international financial institutions, following the drawdown of a United Nations mission and decreased attention from the Security Council. A more dynamic interaction and collaboration with the Security Council would contribute to a productive engagement of the Commission with countries in transition.

Thematic focus: "Recurring relapse into conflict"

50. The third informal interactive dialogue between members of the Security Council and the Commission's group of chairs was convened on 15 July. The Presidency of the Council and the Chair of the Commission identified "recurring relapse into conflict" as a thematic focus for this year's dialogue. The dialogue focused on: (a) the factors that help sustain peace and those that contribute to relapse; and (b) the critical systemic gaps that undermine the effectiveness of the United Nations and the international system's response to and engagement in post-conflict situations. It has also explored the potential contribution of the 2015 review to identifying and addressing those systemic gaps.

51. The Commission noted that its efforts should include the provision of support to mandates and accompanying programmes aimed at rebuilding critical national institutions and to advancing national reconciliation processes. The Commission further underscored the importance of focusing attention on inclusive political processes that would reinforce national ownership, and that international engagement needs to support efforts aimed at rebuilding the fabric of society and the establishment of a new social contract. Several participants emphasized the need for greater support to institution-building and for overcoming the inadequate, fragmented and short-lived financial and technical assistance in this area. In addition, the Commission further emphasized that most conflicts are influenced by regional dynamics and have extensive cross-border linkages. It was, therefore, crucial to identify practical ways to engage regional actors in the design and implementation of international political and accompaniment strategies for countries emerging from conflict in order to mitigate destabilizing regional dynamics.

52. With regard to the systemic gaps that undermine the effectiveness of response and engagement, the dialogue noted the challenges associated with the practical manifestation of the security and development nexus. It was also stressed that efforts aimed at strengthening international coherence in post-conflict settings are hindered by fragmented and siloed responses of security and development actors and by the lack of sustained attention and mutual accountability. The Commission stressed that the sequencing and prioritization of engagement remained a major problem, as mandates and programmatic support do not necessarily target conflict

drivers and risk factors and are at times inappropriate to the country-specific context in which they are employed.

Periodic stock-taking of the scope of the advisory role of the Commission and the modality of interaction

53. The reporting period has witnessed the continuation of periodic expert-level stock-taking that was initiated in 2013 by the Organizational Committee under the coordination of Rwanda. The stock-taking discussions have brought together representatives of the Council's presidencies, "penholders", members of both bodies, chairs of country configurations and the countries on the agenda. The discussions have confirmed that the Commission's advice to the Council needs to remain flexible and pragmatic and should be guided by country-specific contexts.

54. At the same time, some participants in those discussions have called for a strategic approach to the Commission's advisory function that would help clarify how the diverse membership structure and flexible outreach to regional and international partners can complement and help reinforce the political strategy of the Security Council and the United Nations in each specific context. A more dynamic and strategically oriented use of the Commission's convening role, for example, could potentially contribute to improving regional and international coherence of positions and engagement in post-conflict situations.

55. The stock-taking discussions have pointed to three main principles that should underpin the modality of interaction between the Council and the Commission, namely: (a) flexibility and informality; (b) engaging ambassadors, as well as country experts, on the Council; and (c) active follow-up by the Commission on the outcome of the Council's deliberation. In this regard, it was noted that certain Council Presidencies have played a crucial role in creating an informal space for the chairs of country configurations and the countries on the agenda to discuss expectations and objectives of the Commission's engagement ahead of the Council's consideration of the situations in question. The Commission has recognized that 'penholders' can play an equally helpful role. Where they were activated, informal interactions led to formal briefings to the Council and reporting on field visits undertaken by the chairs that were better targeted and more responsive to the Council's needs. Council members have noted in particular that the Commission's interaction was particularly relevant and helpful when the timing of the chairs' field visits and subsequent reporting was aligned with the calendar of the Council's consideration of the situations in the countries concerned. In this respect, Council members noted that a combination of written communications and informal interactions would be particularly helpful. At the same time, some chairs suggested that the informal interactive dialogue format for country-specific discussions needed to be explored prior to an action envisaged by the Council, including during mandate revisions.

F. Working methods

56. The recommendations of the first ever Commission-led Peacebuilding Assessment Mission to Sierra Leone, conducted in November 2013, charted the future of the Commission's engagement with the country. Those recommendations emerged from broad-based consultations conducted by the chair of the configuration

with the Government, the United Nations and key partners on the scope and form of the Commission's engagement with Sierra Leone during and after the drawdown of UNIPSIL. Those consultations were conducted during a visit to Freetown in February 2014 and in subsequent discussions with members of the configuration, the Security Council, senior officials of the Government and civil society. During the visit, the chair sought to secure formal agreement with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders on the future engagement of the Commission. The transformation of the United Nations presence and of the Security Council engagement in Sierra Leone led the Commission to adopt a lighter approach, which sought to respond to the country's needs and concerns. In moving towards a flexible mode of engagement, the peacebuilding priorities included in Sierra Leone's Agenda for Prosperity will continue to provide guidance for the Commission's engagement. A smaller advisory group, which would be convened as needed, was proposed with open membership that would bring together stakeholders that were directly engaged and committed to sustaining support to Sierra Leone. In addition, a light stock-taking was envisaged for the first quarter of 2015 in order to establish the appropriate timing for Sierra Leone's exit from the Commission's agenda. In view of the Ebola outbreak, this process will have to be adjusted and adapted to the emerging needs and challenges of the country. This flexibility in approach will enable the Commission to remain responsive to the needs of the country, as defined by the Government.

57. The Ebola outbreak has created a need for greater flexibility and innovative working methods. The joined-up effort of the Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations, the regular and active participation of United Nations offices and agencies, as well as the World Bank, are a demonstration of the Commission's potential convening power. In addition, the collaboration of the country-specific configurations with the Organizational Committee has demonstrated the benefit of greater alignment of and coherence among the Commission's multiple components. The Commission's formal request to the Secretary-General for an assessment of the impact of the epidemic on State institutions, social cohesion and political fragility, which was communicated by the Chair on 25 November, on behalf of the three configurations, represented an instance of the various components of the Commission working in close collaboration. The Commission has released several statements on the potential impact of the epidemic on State institutions and political stability as a result of discussions held in August and September. These have served as inputs for subsequent actions by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

58. As stipulated in the suggested terms of reference for the 2015 review, the analysis underpinning the review should explore ways to improve the Commission's working methods and decision-making in order to allow for greater involvement of its members and to facilitate inputs from various peacebuilding actors. In this regard, the Commission took note of the communication of the Secretary-General on the collective input of the United Nations system to the review (A/69/553-S/2014/763), a section of which was dedicated to the need for more flexible and dynamic modes of engagement. The Commission recognizes that in addition to its own efforts to streamline and rationalize many aspects of its working methods, there is room for improvement within the overall objective of enabling the Commission to realize its full potential.

G. Emerging cross-cutting issues

Response to the outbreak of Ebola

59. The outbreak of Ebola has significantly affected three of the six countries on the Commission's agenda. The outbreak started in Guinea in early December 2013 and spread to neighbouring Liberia in March 2014 and Sierra Leone in May 2014. As a result, the Commission has shifted its focus to raising awareness in New York of the possible impact of the crisis on peace, stability, social cohesion and economic well-being of those countries in the longer term. Through three meetings in August, September and November and in two statements, the Commission cautioned against isolation of the countries, which would serve to compound the economic hardship resulting from the crisis. The Commission further highlighted the importance of sustained international support in responding to the crisis. The Commission's response has also brought greater attention and realignment on the part of the Peacebuilding Fund. The Fund has demonstrated flexibility that would allow for the emergency reprogramming of active projects in areas such as security sector reform, reconciliation, strengthening communication, and community-level early warning, conflict prevention and management systems.

60. Recognizing that the emergency medical and public health response has benefitted from extensive attention and strong coordination platforms, the Commission instead focused on the potential of the epidemic to reverse the gains made towards peace consolidation. The Commission's discussions highlighted the ways in which the Ebola outbreak has exposed ongoing State fragility and the weaknesses of governance structures despite the important investments made in institution-building in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone over the past decade. The Ebola outbreak has also had a negative impact on many key sectors of the economy, causing sharp downturns in international trade, projected economic growth and the fiscal positions of the three countries most affected.

61. Based on those initial discussions, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to further assess the epidemic's impact on social cohesion, economic development, security, local administration, governance and political institutions, drawing upon the ongoing efforts of the United Nations, the international community, regional organizations and international financial institutions. This assessment should help accelerate and more effectively guide international assistance aimed at promoting institutional and economic recovery.

62. The Commission will continue to offer a platform in New York where the countries most affected by the Ebola outbreak can highlight critical gaps and long-term needs. In connection with its function in the areas of advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention, the Commission will avail itself of the platform for discussions, information-sharing and awareness-raising among a broad constellation of actors that include Member States, the United Nations and international financial institutions.

Participation of women in peacebuilding

63. The Commission has continued to place special emphasis on the importance of the participation of women in and their empowerment for peacebuilding. This work is a continuation of the Commission's focus on the topic in 2013 and its declaration of 26 September 2013 on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding (see

PBC/7/OC/3). The Commission has consistently sought to mainstream a gender perspective throughout its policy and advocacy-related activities in collaboration with UN-Women during the reporting period.

64. On 3 September, the Commission held a special event dedicated to the theme "Women, everyday peacebuilders". The objective of the special event was to shed light on local peacebuilding initiatives led by women in diverse contexts. While high-level peace negotiations receive extensive attention, local peacebuilding initiatives generally garner far less recognition and support. The session was addressed by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee of Liberia and brought together Member States with women peace activists from Colombia, Kenya and Liberia, as well as senior United Nations officials. The discussions recognized the diversity and significance of efforts led by women to build and sustain peace during and after violent conflict. Discussions have also pointed to the need to prioritize women's empowerment in peacebuilding-related strategies and programmes. In a similar vein, the Chair of the Liberia configuration organized a special discussion, in the margins of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on the role of women in promoting the effective management of natural resources as a key part of the overall promotion of inclusive development and sustainable peace.

65. Through its country-specific engagement, the Commission is uniquely placed to proactively engage national stakeholders on women's participation in peacebuilding and to encourage action at the national level, in particular in the field of women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding. In this respect, the Commission noted that the planned high-level global review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), that is also coinciding with the 2015 review, represents an opportunity to assess successes and challenges in strengthening women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding.

III. Conclusions and agenda going forward

66. The next reporting period for the Commission will coincide with the comprehensive review of the peacebuilding architecture led by the General Assembly and the Security Council. At the same time, the Commission will continue to pursue several important work streams that would further strengthen its country-specific and policy-related engagements.

Follow-up to the first and preparation for the second annual session (June 2015)

67. The follow-up to the first annual session will naturally be carried forward in 2015. The follow-up exercise will guide the Commission's preparation for the second annual session, including on the selection of a theme that would help further elaborate on the identified policy areas that require further development.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will designate a coordinator to convene informal discussions of interested members, United Nations partners, international financial institutions, regional organizations and development banks

- The informal discussions will explore: (a) the specific policy areas that require further elaboration during the second annual session in relation to domestic revenue generation in and the fight against illicit financial flows from countries emerging from conflict; and (b) general advocacy-related actions with intergovernmental forums in collaboration with and support of the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa

Integrate the perspectives of regional actors

68. The Commission will continue to place particular emphasis on engaging and collaborating with regional actors in policy-related and country-specific activities.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will consult with the African Caucus in follow-up to the visit undertaken by the Chair of the Commission and chairs of the Burundi, Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau configurations to the African Union headquarters (26 November). The purpose of the follow-up will be to ensure that the agreed areas of policy and country-specific collaboration are activated
- The Organizational Committee will also follow up on the relevant ideas generated through the Cairo workshop on regional aspects of peacebuilding identifying gaps, challenges and opportunities, in particular as it concerned efforts to forge more effective partnerships and coherence among African regional actors, the United Nations and international financial institutions
- The country configurations will continue to engage members from Africa, including through the African Caucus, in support of the agreed peacebuilding priorities and objectives for each country on the agenda, with particular emphasis on Burundi, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau

Focus and sustain attention on the long-term impacts of the Ebola outbreak

69. The Commission will follow up on the anticipated assessment by the United Nations of the impact of the Ebola outbreak in the areas of security, local governance, political institutions, social cohesion and economic recovery, taking into consideration a comprehensive regional and longer-term approach.

Action

- The Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations will explore the specific advocacy channels through which the outcome of the assessment can be further pursued, including through partnerships with United Nations and non-United Nations actors
- The three configurations will periodically update the members of the Organizational Committee on the results of its joint advocacy and accompanied efforts and will explore the need for collective messaging from the Commission, including through political statements, as appropriate

Improve the advisory function to and modality of interaction with the General Assembly and the Security Council

70. The Commission will continue to explore practical means to exercise its advisory function to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will draw upon the main findings of the stock-taking exercise undertaken in 2014 of its advisory function to and modality of interaction with the Security Council. To this end, the Committee will designate one of the Commission's members on the Security Council to succeed Rwanda in coordinating this periodic stock-taking exercise
- The Chair will coordinate with the Presidency of the Security Council in preparation for the convening of the fourth informal interactive dialogue, which can take place in conjunction with the upcoming annual briefing to the Council on the present report
- The chairs of relevant country configurations will continue to ensure that their periodic formal briefings to the Council on the countries concerned will be synchronized with the timing of their field visits and will be focused on specific areas to which the Council's attention should be drawn

Develop a strategy to strengthen the gender perspective in country-specific engagement

71. The Commission will develop a practical approach to its thematic focus on women's participation in peacebuilding in 2013 and 2014.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will initiate a discussion on elements of a possible strategy that can help integrate a gender perspective into its country-specific engagement within the framework of performing its three core functions

Improve certain aspects of the working methods

72. The Commission will continue to explore improvements in outstanding areas of its working methods that would enhance the clarity of its objectives and the predictability of its calendar and activities.

Action

- Starting in mid-February 2015, the Organizational Committee will share a quarterly indicative calendar, timeline and progress in the implementation of the actions stipulated in this forward agenda
- By mid-February 2015, country-specific configurations will share the basic outlines of their objectives and planned activities for the year; those outlines will be updated on a quarterly basis
- By mid-February 2015, the Working Group on Lessons Learned will submit its suggested focus theme and work programme for the year.